

EXTENDED VACATIONS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR THINGS TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TRAVELLING

Travelling abroad can be a positive experience because travelling:

- is fun;
- maintains cultural connections to a family's country of origin;
- develops cultural sensitivity and appreciation;
- helps children experience a wide repertoire of sights, smells, sounds, colours, faces, and languages;
- helps children become more adaptable and flexible;
- gives students real-world experiences outside the classroom; and
- provides opportunities for visiting with family in other countries, which maintains important connections.

PLANNING TO TRAVEL DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR? CONSIDER F.L.A.G.

- **F is for Frequency.** How often do you take your children out of school so that you can travel together? If it is often, consider doing so less often.
- **L is for Length.** Will your children be missing a day or two or a week? If so, less is best.
- **A is for Ability.** How capable are your children of filling in the gaps as a result of not being at school? Does your child seem anxious about not being able to catch up after returning? This is one of the most important considerations.
- **G is for Grade.** A child in Grade 1 who is a strong student may be at less of a disadvantage when missing days of school than a student in Grade 11 who may miss major assignments and/or opportunities to adequately prepare for exams. In contrast, a child in Grade 1 who is struggling to learn to read may be at a greater disadvantage than a student in the older grades.

Source: Dimerman, S. (2014). *Is it okay to pull your child out of school to travel?* Retrieved from: <https://www.helpmesara.com/2014/02/is-it-ok-to-pull-your-child-out-of-school-to-travel/>

IMPACT OF EXTENDED VACATIONS

- Chronic absenteeism is generally defined as being absent more than 2 weeks of the school year or 10% or more of the school year.
- 18 school days represents 10% of the school year.
- While chronic absences at any grade are detrimental, they may be especially so during the formative early elementary grades, when class time is mainly focused on developing the foundations for academic success through math and reading skills.

- Students who miss too much school between Kindergarten and Grade 1, are less likely to read at grade level and are more likely to have delayed math skills by Grade 3.
- Missing 3 or more days a month can impact reading levels by up to 2 or 3 years.
- Students who do not read at grade level are less likely than skilled readers to graduate from high school. Long-term consequences include unstable finances, an increased risk of unemployment, and lower educational achievement.
- English Language Learners that miss a significant amount of school are less likely to develop classroom language/vocabulary.
- Students who have learning or thinking differences and miss a significant amount of school, also have missed opportunities for intervention, re-teaching and enrichment.
- Presence at school is important for more than just academic skills – students learn other interpersonal and resiliency skills that will allow them to be successful in life beyond their school years.

HOW CAN YOU LIMIT THE IMPACT OF EXTENDED ABSENCES FOR VACATIONS?

- Travel during school holidays such as during the summer months, or during Winter or Spring Break – the fewer school days missed, the better.
- Consider shorter stays – for example, if you are attending a wedding, travel only for the dates that you need to be there.
- Provide children with opportunities to remain connected with school while they are absent. Students can keep in communication with their teacher and classmates through email, sending photo journals, or through video conferencing (e.g., teacher demonstrations, story reading, etc.).

WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU COME BACK?

- Devote time to supporting your child, and have your child seek out a peer tutor or homework helper.
- Ensure that your child is prepared to spend additional time on homework.